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In the claims:

Claim 1. (Previously Amended) A backing plate comprising:

abutment plate means for resisting braking forces, and

a shielding plate made of damped steel configured to shield brake components from dust and dirt and reducing noise and vibrations.

Claim 2. (Previously cancelled)

Claim 3. (Previously Amended) A backing plate according to claim 1 wherein said damped steel comprises outer and inner layers of steel and an inner layer of vibration dampening material, said layers of steel being of approximately equal thickness.

Claim 4. (Currently Amended) A backing plate comprising an abutment plate ~~having~~ comprising a first part configured to be attached to an axle of a vehicle and a second part extending from said first part and configured to resist braking forces applied thereto by brake shoes during braking, and a shielding plate extending beyond said abutment plate and configured to shield brake components, and wherein said abutment and shielding plates are made of different materials and said shielding plate is made of damped steel that dampens noise and vibrations.

Claim 6. (Previously Amended) A backing plate according to claim 4 wherein said damped steel comprises first and second layers of steel of approximately equal thickness.

Claim 7. (Previously Amended) A backing plate according to claim 4 wherein said abutment plate is made of steel.

Claim 8 (Previously cancelled)

Claim 9. (Amended) A shielding plate comprising a sheet of damped steel configured to be attached to a vehicle and at least partially encompass brake components to protect said brake

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components from dust and dirt, and an abutment plate configured to engage a vehicle housing and to engage brake shoes and to resist braking forces applied by said brake shoes, wherein said abutment plate and shielding plate are made of different materials.

Claim 10 (Original) A shielding plate according to claim 9 wherein said brake components are components of a drum brake.

Claim 11 (Previously cancelled)

Claim 12 (Previously Amended) A shielding plate according to claim 9 wherein said damped steel comprises first and second layers of steel on opposite sides of a dampening material, said first and second layers having approximately equal thickness.

Claim 13. (Currently Amended) A ~~combination backing plate~~ according to claim 1 wherein said abutment plate means and said shielding plate are attached to each other.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended) A ~~combination backing plate~~ according to claim 1 wherein said shielding plate is configured to have a hydraulic cylinder mounted thereon.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended) A drum brake comprising an abutment plate comprising a sheet of steel having a first part configured to attach to an axle housing and a second part configured to resist braking forces applied by brake shoes, and a shielding plate made of damped steel attached to said abutment plate and configured to support said brake shoes, wherein said abutment plate and said shielding plate are made of different materials.

Claim 16 (Original) A drum brake according to claim 15 wherein said shielding plate is configured to receive a hydraulic cylinder.

Claim 17 (Original) A drum brake according to claim 15 wherein said damped steel comprises two sheets of steel of approximately equal thickness.